institution' and one of the most comprehensive of its kind in the country. As the architect of many reforms of and additions to the hospital, Percival was an expert on every aspect of this emerging new institution. And Manchester was taken to portend what was to come. The hospital was an increasingly important social institution in provincial towns and its growing prominence brought the medical profession a kind of status and a form of social authority it did not possess in the first half of the eighteenth century. The public or social aspect of hospital practice also created new kinds of strain and conflict within it. These developments eventually transformed both the institutional character of the hospital and the profession of medicine. Percival's real significance was to have seen at an early stage that this had implications for medical ethics.

However modern his views on the subject, Percival was still careful to reassert certain traditional features of the hospital as part of his overall picture. This is signalled by the lines of popular poetry with which he introduces his discussion of the hospital as a moral institution:

> ... Lo! A goodly hospital ascends,
> In which they bade each lenient aid be nigh,
> That could the sick-bed smooth of that sad company.
> It was a worthy edifying sight,
> And gives to human kind peculiar grace,
> To see kind hands attending day and night,
> With tender ministry, from place to place:
> Some prop the head; some, from the pallid face,
> Wipe off the faint cold dews weak nature sheds;
> Some reach the healing draught; the whilst to chace
> The fear supreme, around their softened beds,
> Some holy man by prayer all opening heaven dispreds.[12]

The sentimental and traditional image of the hospital as a holy sanctuary and refuge, evoked by James Thomson, was a potent one and thus difficult to abandon even in the age of science. For Percival in his capacity as moral legislator it was a particularly useful device. Perhaps more than any other contemporary institution, the hospital was the setting for an ongoing conflict between science and religion. It was, as we shall see presently, this tension that gave medical ethics much of its specific task and at the same time its hybrid and ambiguous character.

In the discursive appendix or *Notes and Illustrations* that supplemented his aphoristic code, Percival proudly presented a piece entitled 'Discourse on Hospital Duties', originally delivered by his

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